

Third*i*

Policy Stakeholder Engagement

White Paper

Bringing stakeholders into play: Participatory methods for multi-stakeholder engagement in the health sector

Third-i bvba
Michael Creek
Jacqueline Bowman-Busato
February 2018



This White Paper and its contents are owned by Third-i bvba and are licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License. Any copy or distribution for non-commercial purposes must provide clear references to the original text and title: *White Paper: Bringing stakeholders into play; Participatory methods for multi-stakeholder engagement in the health sector; Third-i bvba 2018, Brussels.*

About Third-I www.third-i.eu

Founded in 2013 by Jacqueline Bowman-Busato, Third-i is a Brussels- based SME with a presence in London and Washington DC operating under the ethos of Shared Value.

Specialising in healthcare policy and innovation-driven initiatives, the team builds alliances, sets agendas, and leads the development of actionable strategies and implementation to answer today's complex healthcare challenges. A trusted member of the healthcare and innovation communities at European, national and global actors level, Third-i team members have worked extensively in the field of Person centred care from a systems thinking and participatory stakeholder engagement perspective.

We champion five main areas which we believe will lead to our vision of Person-centred health ecosystems:

- Patient engagement
- Value of Innovation
- Mainstreaming mental health
- Self-Care and wellbeing
- Women's empowerment (maternal health and other women's health issues)

We have developed a system for internal buy-in and capacity building on the one hand and meaningful multi-stakeholder engagement across the healthcare ecosystem from policy to practice.

In short

Stakeholder engagement needs to be both participatory and meaningful to have real impact in the health sector. Gamification, collective intelligence and deliberative democracy techniques are innovative and multi-stakeholder means of engagement which have the potential to revolutionise the way health stakeholders work together. They are truly participatory in that they bring people together face to face through playful structures which ensure stakeholders engage on a level playing field. They also provide meaningful outcomes that can be integrated into the broader policy dialogue. The range of formats meet a variety of needs within the sector, and the adaptability of each format ensures that specific objectives are achieved.

Why stakeholder engagement?

Organisations in the health sector have a broad set of stakeholders. These can include patients and patient organisations, healthcare providers and practitioners, caregivers, research and academia, economic actors, policy, payers, regulators and the public – any group which affects or is affected by the achievements of an organisation's purpose.[1] To meet our objectives as organisations, we must take account of these stakeholders' expectations, needs and concerns.

Engagement is particularly important in health research, innovation and governance, where the sector is under pressure to be increasingly open to societal needs and concerns. Questions regarding research priorities or relevant research outcomes needed to support policy decisions are not trade-offs that can be answered solely through scientific decision-making, as they also involve value-based assessments.[2]

If stakeholders are not engaged, organisations risk failure. This could take the shape of a market failure, loss of trust or damage to reputation. By not engaging, we also risk an antagonistic response to our efforts: history has shown that if we do not reach out for feedback before taking decisions, the people affected are likely to impose that feedback whether we like it or not, requiring crisis management. [3]

The benefits of engagement go further than just limiting this potential failure, however. By striking up dialogue with our stakeholders and taking on board what they have to say, we open up possibilities for unforeseen advantages. When stakeholders raise issues we did not anticipate, we are confronted with opportunities to grow and learn. By engaging more closely, we create additional connections and broaden our networks. We place ourselves as facilitators of a wider multi-stakeholder dialogue where our organisations have significant influence.

The challenge: making it participatory, meaningful and multi-stakeholder

Most organisations in the health sector have worked to build relationships with their various stakeholders in the usual ways – conferences and events, advisory boards, high-level meetings and

the typical communication channels. This engagement is often limited in its effectiveness, with three main problems arising.

The first is that the engagement is rarely truly participatory. Panel sessions often fail to engage delegates at conferences because stakeholders feel they are simply being talked at. At high-level meetings, external stakeholders can easily feel as though they are placed on a different footing to others around the table, making them reluctant to engage. Online activities can have a broad reach, but often fail to engage people deeply and in a sustained way.

Secondly, typical stakeholder engagement can also be tokenistic. Often, communication and marketing activities are dressed up as real engagement, but it soon becomes clear that the organisation's objective is to sell its services, for example, rather than to truly take account of the feedback. This can be particularly disengaging for stakeholders who have made the effort to participate but then never hear how their input later shaped the organisation's processes.

Thirdly, in the cases where stakeholder engagement does take place in a participatory and meaningful way, it tends to be bilateral. Working with patient groups, training HCPs, working closely with policymakers – these types of activity bring the organisation together with a single homogeneous group of stakeholders at a time. They are certainly beneficial but these benefits could be multiplied through the opportunity to engage multiple sets of stakeholders at once. We often have the sense that bringing more than one stakeholder profile into the room could be uncomfortable, mainly since we lack the means to structure such an activity.

CASE STUDY

Scoping the value of innovation: A global research-driven healthcare company based in Basel has been working on determining the value of innovation in oncology patient care. The challenge was to engage multiple stakeholders who were unaccustomed to engaging with one another in a constructive discussion about the value of innovation in therapeutic care, and determine the best way to measure this value. The solution was the development of a discussion game, overseen by a diverse team of multi-stakeholder experts, launched at the European Health Forum Gastein. The format is an application of game theory that has had proven results in encouraging diverse participants to share their perspectives and listen to others before come to a conclusion.

Participatory methods for stakeholder engagement

An innovative solution to these challenges is a participatory, multi-stakeholder approach. This encompasses a range of dynamic, face-to-face activities which bring stakeholders together to engage in a structured, facilitated way, where the outcomes of the activity are then integrated into actionable content. These methods include elements of gamification, collective intelligence, participatory dialogue games, deliberative

democracy techniques and scenario building workshops.

Taking a playful approach fosters creativity and innovation. By applying a game-like structure to stakeholder engagement, we emphasise possibilities, freedom, and process versus outcome, self-consciousness, responsibility and shame.[4] Play draws on imagination, new frames of interaction and a safe context in which to take risks,

to try on new roles, and to explore new potential ways of working together.[5] This less self-conscious approach is also more inclusive towards multiple stakeholders of a range of backgrounds. The rigid structure of the activity serves to level the playing field, applying equal emphasis to the contributions of each participant, helping them to explore each other's needs and opinions and encouraging them to work together towards common ground.

Research strongly supports the effectiveness of these methods. Participatory stakeholder engagement methodologies have been shown to improve outcomes in a range of contexts within the health sector: research agenda setting[6], technology development[7] and public-private R&D collaborations[8], among others. A participatory approach legitimises outcomes, builds trust and increases buy-in from stakeholders.

[1] Freeman. Strategic management: A stakeholder approach. Pitman (1984)

[2] Deverka et al. Stakeholder participation in comparative effectiveness research: defining a framework for effective engagement, PMC (2013).

[3] Jeffery. Stakeholder Engagement: A Road Map to Meaningful Engagement. Cranfield (2009)

[4] Gauntlett, Creative explorations: new approaches to identities and audiences. Routledge. 2007

[5] Mabogunje; et al. L. Roosimölder, ed. "Product Design and Intentional Emergence facilitated by Serious Play". 2008

[6] Caron-Flinterman et al. Stakeholder participation in health research agenda setting: the case of asthma and COPD research in the Netherlands. Science and Public Policy (2006) 33 (4): 291-304.

[7] Broerse et al. Requirements for biotechnology development: the necessity for an interactive and participatory innovation process. International Journal of Biotechnology (IJBT), Vol. 2, No. 4, 2000

[8] Roelofsen et al. Stakeholder interaction within research consortia on emerging technologies: Learning how and what? Research Policy (2011)
